

Aurora to be alive with the sound of music - if plan moves forward

By Brock Weir

Concerts and music festivals have become hot ticket events on Aurora's annual social calendar, but the Town's efforts to become a music destination could be turned up to eleven this week.

Council is set to approve a new music strategy, which sets out a plan to make Aurora a friendly environment for music creation, promote Aurora's burgeoning music sector, build bridges with other musically friendly cities, and encourage the business side of music as well.

Tentatively approved by Council at last week's General Committee meeting, the Music Strategy stems out of a Council motion from September of 2013 calling for a live music strategy to position Aurora as a music centre and add renewed vigor to the arts and culture community.

The music sector provides direct employment, pays business taxes and generates spending on other sectors such as restaurants, hotels, photographers, videographers, stylists, graphic designers, taxi and limo companies, travel agents, web designers, caterers, accountants and advertising agencies, reads the strategy on the benefits of being a Music Town. It also provides essential contributions to the creative industries such as film, digital interactive media, fashion and the production of live events.

Live music venues and music festivals attract thousands of tourists annually to Aurora, while industry assets like recording studios, agencies, management companies and publishers draw music business to the Town with economic benefit. But, beyond pure economics, music is a contributor to the positive, social and cultural fabric of the Town. Music is a form of celebration, with the power to build bridges and unite communities. Music adds vibrancy, celebrates diversity and increases the livability of Aurora.

The strategy sees a Town like Aurora fitting into the musical picture by making sure local musicians have fair opportunities to participate in Town-sponsored events, make municipally controlled venues more accessible towards music programs, including the needs of music businesses in development plans, and supporting music programs for disadvantaged communities.

A Music Town is a place where musicians, song writers, recording engineers, music videographers and other music creators live, the strategy outlines. These innovators are drawn to creative hubs throughout the Town where they collaborate and inspire each other. In turn, their presence and their activities draw other young professionals who want to work and live in these newly chic enclaves.

Top priorities within the plan include professional education programs, more affordable rehearsal space, fair compensation for performers, and considering the needs of the music community in new bylaws and regulation including noise regulations and [balancing] the interests of residents and other businesses with those of venues and concert promoters, ensuring that the wellbeing of the music industry, as well as the wider public interest without unnecessary restrictions and fines.

Making music a career rather than just a hobby is a challenge. Most music creators are entrepreneurs, essentially operating in their own small business with limited professional support. Creators are often unaware of the resources available to them in Aurora. In the same way the Town produces forums for small business today, it could help facilitate opportunities for creators to learn about exciting infrastructure and resources to connect with industry leaders.

Council approved the draft plan at the Committee Level last week, along with directing staff to apply for funding through the Ontario Music Fund Grant to bolster the goals of the initiative. Their decision is set for ratification this week.